

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application. Claims 1 and 7 have been amended, and claims 9-15 are newly added. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

As an initial matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the thoroughness of the Office Action.

Applicants also thank the Examiner for accepting the drawings filed on November 7, 2003, for acknowledging Applicants' claim for foreign priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document, and for considering all of the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statements filed on February 3, 2005 and February 9, 2005.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to paragraphs 0015 and 0028 of the specification. To address the Examiner's concerns, Applicants have amended paragraphs 0015 and 0028, and respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takai et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2002/0029096). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

One aspect of the present invention is directed towards a central control system that controls multiple air conditioners. The central control system includes a central controller that is connected to the multiple air conditioners, and

a protocol converter that performs a communication protocol conversion of a signal. The central controller transmits and receives signals based on an air conditioner communication protocol to control the multiple air conditioners, and is connected to an external network (such as, but not limited to, the Internet) for transmitting and receiving signals based on an Ethernet communication protocol. The central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol. The protocol converter may be connected to the central controller via a serial port of the central controller.

Another aspect of the present invention is directed to a method of operating a central control system for multiple air conditioners. The method includes, inter alia, receiving, by a central controller, a control command for the multiple air conditioners, and transmitting, by a central controller, the control command to a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol. The method also includes converting, by the protocol converter, the received control command into a control command based on an air conditioner communication protocol.

Takai et al. relates to an air conditioner management system. The system includes, inter alia, a personal computer 100, and a converter unit 200. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0025. The personal computer 100 is connected to the converter unit 200 via a universal serial bus (USB) 400. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0028. Applicants submit that Takai does not disclose (or even

suggest) that the personal computer connects to the converter unit 200 using an Ethernet communication protocol, or that the converter unit 200 converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai et al. fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol, as recited, for example, in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takai et al. also fails to disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system that includes transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol, and converting, by the protocol converter, the received control command into a control command based on an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited, for example, in claim 7.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-8 as being anticipated by Takai et al.

In the Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 1-3, 5, 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Meyer (U.S. Patent No.

6,157,943). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Meyer is directed to a facilities management system 10 which can be supervised from a secondary workstation 33. See col. 4, lines 7-17. The secondary workstation 33 includes a Web server program 52 that handles the exchange of information over the Internet via TCP/IP, and a OLE 55 coupled to the Web server program 52 which has software interfaces based on a process control industry standard. See Figure 3 and col. 4, lines 19-39. Applicants submit that the secondary workstation 33 does not transmit signals to and receive signals from a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol, as taught in the present invention.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in, for example, claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Meyer also fails to disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system that includes transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol, and converting, by the protocol converter, the received

control command into a control command based on an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in, for example, claim 7.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-3, 5, 7 and 8 over Meyer.

In the Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 1-3, 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Masui et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2003/0140637). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Masui et al. is directed to an air conditioner control system that includes a central remote controller 5. See Figure 1 and paragraph 0134. Applicants submit that Masui et al. fails to disclose (or even suggest) that the central remote controller transmits signals to and receives signals from a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol, or that a protocol converter converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Masui et al. fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol, as recited, for example, in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Masui et al. also fails to disclose (or even suggest) a method of operating a central control system that includes transmitting, by a central controller, a control command to a protocol converter using an Ethernet communication protocol, and converting, by the protocol converter, the received control command into a control command based on an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in, for example, claim 7.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that the presently defined invention is not anticipated by Masui et al., and respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-3, 5, 7 and 8.

The Examiner rejected claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Meyer in view of Nakamura et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2003/0033392). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

As discussed above, Meyer fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in claim 1.

Applicants submit that Nakanura et al. fails to disclose that which is lacking in Meyer. Specifically, Applicants submit that Nakamura et al., which relates to an air conditioner and a control software updating system, also fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and

a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of Meyer and Nakamura et al., as asserted by the Examiner, fails to disclose or suggest a central control system that includes a central controller and a protocol converter, where the central controller transmits signals to and receives signals from the protocol converter using the Ethernet communication protocol, and the protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the invention of claim 4 is not obvious over the prior art combination set forth by the Examiner, and thus request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claim 4 as being obvious over Meyer in view of Nakamura et al.

Based upon the above remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 2-6 and 8 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to the independent claims.

Newly added independent claim 9 recites a central control system that includes a protocol converter connected to a central controller, where the protocol converter converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol. Applicants respectfully

submit that the prior art applied by the Examiner fails to disclose or suggest such a combination of features. For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 9 is in condition for allowance.

Newly added dependent claims 10-15 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 9.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

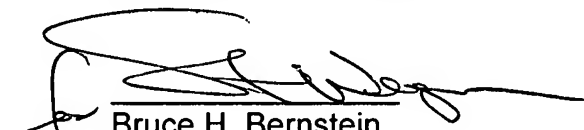
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendment to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully Submitted,
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